This Business of Operations

By James Radley

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The patient's point of view, told in a breezy style. The same subject has been much better covered by previous authors.

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BY

JAMES RADLEY

FOREWORD BY

J. M. WITHROW, M. D.

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FOREWORD

MR. RADLEY'S account of his hospital experience is a well told story which should touch a responsive chord in a vast number of readers. Its value, however, will largely lie in bringing before the public a good picture of the modern hospital, and in dispelling the very common impression of the gray and gloomy almshouse, or infirmary, which in the minds of many represents the hospital.

People generally are beginning to wake up to the new hospital idea, to realize that it is a place for making sick and injured people well, and not altogether an institution for meeting the needs of poverty through public organized charity.

The hospital, as Mr. Radley found it, is a *hotel for sick people*, fully equipped with the best scientific appliances for that purpose, and conducted by highly trained experts, not only for meeting the special needs of its patients in restoring their lost health and usefulness, but also in surrounding them with order, cleanliness, and beauty, and best of all with a spirit of kindness, gentleness, and self-sacrificing devotion, which nearly always inspires them with higher ideals of life and clearer conceptions of the better side of humanity.

Nearly all who come under the beneficent influence of a high-grade modern hospital go out with an exalted impression of the inestimable value of human kindness as administered by trained nurses and scientifically educated and consecrated physicians and surgeons.

It is probable that this human stimulation by the hospital spirit is, in many cases, as helpful to the patient as the cure of his ills.

The reader will note that Mr. Radley's enthusiasm was as great for the hospital atmosphere—its spirit—as for his own recovery.

This is the phase of the book that should catch the hearts of those who read.

The book will make a fine contribution in putting over the conviction that it is good practice to make *getting well* and *keeping well* a business, by using hospital facilities to that end, and that there is no better course in the curriculum of human education than an experience as a hospital patient.

J. M. Withrow, M. D.

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THIS BUSINESS OF OPERATIONS

This Business of Operations

INTRODUCTION

I NEVER HAD but one operation of the major variety, but that one certainly "took." It took physically, but what is more to the purpose of this book, it also took mentally. I am not one of those who use their operations as a convenient subject for conversation; who, when talk drags at a party, drop a casual, "That reminds me of the time I was operated on—" I maintain that, suddenly confronted by a surgeon and his carving instruments, I could take an operation or leave it alone, just as I pleased.

That opinion, though, is not held by all of my friends. Let me merely mention "lesion" or "cyst" (terms which I picked up during my convalescence), and somebody is bound to say, "Radley, you've got an operation complex." Or some one will wink slyly at the rest of the party and remark, "Well, boys, we might as well make up our minds to go to the hospital, the whole bunch of us—Jim'll never give in and be perfectly happy until he has the lot of us hacked to pieces by some of his cheerful knifers."

And so they go on. Their kidding I suspect is sometimes deliberately planned to bring me

to grief, as when we are in a golf match, or engaged in a friendly game of poker. I know of one occasion when my tee shot went into the rough because one of the foursome wise-cracked me about "slicing" the ball, apropos of something that had just been said about my operation. Nor has the putting green been sacred to silence; more than once I have missed a two- or three-foot putt and lost the hole in a match-play round, because the boys had dragged the whole length of the fairway some innocent remark I had made about "a doctor friend of mine," or "that time I was in the hospital."

And if it is bridge or draw-poker it is the same story. Many a time I have been inveigled into "staying" in a jack-pot round just because the boys had needed but a chance remark of mine about thyroids to start the fun going and get my mind off my game.

Meetings of boards that I am a member of, conferences on important business deals—let me so much as mention the weather, and in a round-about way (from the state of the barometer to rheumatism, perhaps, and so on to the condition of the adrenal glands, or whatever it is that connects up with the rheumatic condition), and the conversation finally gets around to "Radley's operation." I firmly believe that if any one of my business interests were suddenly confronted with bankruptcy, the directors' meet-

ing called to consider the situation would resolve itself chiefly into a whimsical discussion of "the time Radley was slashed to ribbons."

I mention all this because my friends say that I am sold on operations. As a matter of fact, I am. And I let them rag on because I feel that maybe their continual thinking upon the subject is going to do more than anything else to sell *them* on the idea, too. And in reporting the fun *they* get out of it, and in the following pages the satisfactions that have come to me from my operation, I hope to sell some at least of my readers on the importance of operations—that is, when operations are called for.

Or I might put it this way: none of my friends who love to bandy my "hospital career" about but would, if necessity suddenly arose, enter the operating room with a whole lot less fear and dread than if they had not so often joked about my own operation. And those to whom I have told the whole story of my experience would, I believe, regard their operation, not as a necessary evil, but as an experience that had more than merely physical benefits to offer—that had certain mental compensations to give also.

And I hope my story, as told in the following pages, will have the same effect upon my readers. The insight which the experience gave me into the attitude of the medical folks towards

the rest of us—their desire to make us better and more efficient human machines, and happier men and women; their hatred of disease and bodily handicaps of every kind; their fine loyalty to their ideals of physical perfection and well-being; their splendid devotion to their sense of service to their fellow men; and on top of it all to have an opportunity to see all of this sublimated in the unselfish and untiring efforts of the great body of nurses to relieve pain and suffering, to spread cheerfulness and instil hope where there was no hope before—to pass through such an experience alone is something to look forward to rather than to shun. I had read about it; people had told me about it; but it meant nothing to me until I had got it first-hand. Now I know, and I believe my whole attitude towards life, towards the suffering and the happiness that go along with it, and towards the people about me, is a bit more enlightened, bigger I hope, more charitable, than it was before.

I am aware that in talking like this I am letting myself in for a lot more joshing by those of my friends who may read it; probably they will say that the next thing they know I will be writing poetry or something, which for a few rounds will throw me off my golf game and lead to disastrous results in our first game of stud-poker—but even so, they will only be selling

themselves even more firmly on the whole idea of operations.

And in helping the reader to understand the doctor better, I also would like to be the means of making the physician seem a little more vivid to him. With most of us there is no question about the reality of the business expert who analyzes our business for us, or of the garage expert who advises us about our automobile, or about this or that other expert who stands in our mind for exact knowledge in a particular line. These are live, vital personages to us because they deal with things that are a vivid part of our daily lives. But the doctor to most of us always remains a vague, shadowy figure that comes into the house when somebody has a cold, say, or to whose office we go for this or that minor ailment, upon which he retires back into the vagueness again. After an operation, however, there is no one in whose mind the doctor does not immediately take on a reality, a vividness, that will broaden his mental horizons that much.

If in helping the reader to all of this I go into some detail at times concerning my personal experience, he will remember that it is in this way that I can best present my case, since what I myself saw and felt during my experience is a far better argument, to me at least, than any amount of theory; the hospital to which I was taken probably represents the average type of

American hospital; I myself probably represented the average case that is brought there for care —and this book is written for average people like myself, folks who can best grasp the importance of a problem when they are confronted with concrete cases rather than general statements.

PUTTING OFF TILL TO-MORROW—

EXTENDING back over a period of the past five or six years, I had known something to be wrong with my physical machinery. What it was I would not let myself discover, because I didn't want to get down to grips with it. I wouldn't let myself analyze my condition. Illness of any kind meant cure, and cure meant that you had to have a doctor—and doctors stood in my mind for a lot of things that I did not want to go through with.

The result was that whenever I discovered a thought creeping into my mind about how overweight I was becoming, or about the headaches that were becoming more and more frequent, I headed it off by starting to think about a new investment in corner real estate that I was figuring on, or else to work out a way of taking a stroke off my usual score on the thirteenth hole at my golf club—not a particularly hard hole, but one that consistently refused to let me get below four on a par three.

For I *was* overweight—by some fifty pounds. Which was disturbing, considering the fact that I am only medium height. I was easily fatigued by an amount of exertion that should have been child's play for me. Climbing a flight of stairs

left me catching my breath, while two flights had me literally breathless.

On top of this, I was nervous, irritable. I did my best to keep this covered, but I had no illusions about my success. Do my best, still it was impossible to keep from the family the fact that "something's wrong with dad," or from the office force the feeling that "the boss is off his feed." With men who came into my office, or whom I met in a social way, I think I was more fortunate, since there would be a diverting story to be told, or a new business venture outlined, with the usual gossip of the business world in which we might be mutually interested.

So well did these contacts with other men serve to keep my mind off myself that I wasted enough time talking, just talking, to launch successfully half a dozen businesses. During that period I must have listened to every known version of the story of the Irishman and the two "Eyetalians," and all the rest of the type. I discussed with enthusiasm the day's market reports with men who knew less about the stock market even than I—for I was not interested directly in stocks, beyond a few rails that I had bought somewhere.

I even remember, with a feeling of sorrow, of letting salesmen, in their eagerness to "sell" me on their line, talk on endlessly about such

high spots in the day's news as the pitching of Walter Johnson, or the open-field running of "Red" Grange; of some new balk-line achievement by Willie Hoppe, and all that. And then at the end of the interview I would say "no" with the most utter callousness. I myself in those days must have achieved an enviable record as the champion long-distance listener.

And the plays I went to see, and the grand operas I went to hear! Most of them, since I went to have my mind taken off myself, entertained me, but I am sure they would bore me to distraction now, since I am well and can entertain and divert myself in such far more interesting ways.

All of this, I want to make clear, was chiefly for the purpose of keeping my mind off my most obvious need: to get down to brass tacks in the business of finding out what was wrong with myself physically, and then going and getting something done. I laugh now at my foolish attempts to stall on this important matter. More than once I would be in a golf foursome that contained a doctor, or I would meet them around friendly games of cards, or at dinner tables. Let one of them look my way and I would suspect that he was thinking about what a perfectly corking subject I would make for surgical experiment. And immediately I would set up a barrage of chatter that would send

his thoughts, if he had any designs on me, flying off in some other direction. I suppose every version of that story of the Irishman and the two Italians that I heard from young salesmen in my office I passed on in turn to doctors who rested too eager an eye upon me. In their presence I talked as animatedly as I had listened silently to others.

I smile as I think upon what would have happened if the young salesman from Chicago and one of the doctors of my home city had ever got together and compared their notes of me. "A regular chatterbox," I can hear the doctor saying, and the young salesman replying, "Yes, about as talkative as a baked clam. But then, I like good listeners."

On two or three occasions doctors succeeded, by cunning strategy, in breaking through my barrage. I marvel now at the restraint they displayed as they broached the subject.

"Radley," would be the gist of their remarks, "I wish you would drop in on me some afternoon. Your stance is all right, and I like the way you handle your iron shots. But—I *don't* like the way you came puffing up the hill to the fifteenth tee just now, and how red in the face it made you. And there are other things, too. Pardon what might seem like undue interest in what is none of my business, but I know how easy it is for a busy" (business of wincing on my

part) "man to overlook these things. I won't take much of your time, and none of your money —and if everything is all right I will be a whole lot more pleased even than yourself."

Then I would go on and explain that I came of a puffing family, that hills on fourteenth holes never failed to make me savage, which accounted for the sudden access of redness as to my face.

Whether my reply would anger the doctor, or merely determine him to get me yet (for they did get me, as my narrative will reveal), I do not know, but somewhere at this point the conversation would suddenly change to some other topic into which the condition of my physique could not be dragged in by a team of Missouri mules.

One concession I did make at intervals to what I felt sure would be a demand made by almost any reasonable and conscientious doctor. On one or two occasions I took time out from my business and visited the tropics and other vacation grounds, for periods of a month to six weeks. These trips were unfortunate in a way, for while they did me no particular good, I believe, yet they always quieted any fears that might have been growing on me with regard to myself by covering up most of my symptoms. For though I might puff coming up the hill on the fourteenth hole at the Forest Dale Club,

yet I could battle a tarpon to a standstill over a half-hour's stretch of give and take, and come out of the struggle as fresh as when I went in. The coat of tan that I readily took on would be easily mistaken for evidence of renewed health, and I would come back home to look any doctor in the eye at thirty paces and defy him to find anything wrong with me. Each time, though, I was brought up standing when I tried to take a flight or two of stairs on the run, or attempted to negotiate the fourteenth hole without the usual puffing.

And so I went on, year after year, sensing that something should be done about my case, plainly a case that only an operation would relieve, but refusing to ferret out the facts and look them squarely in the face. I have heard of people who were so afraid of the dark, of a darkened room for example, that they would not carry into it a lighted lamp, afraid to exchange their dread for at least a certainty of what kind of danger lurked there. And all the time, if they only knew it, there was nothing in the room at all except the dark.

That describes pretty much my own condition. The more I tried to dodge my obvious duty of having a doctor go over me thoroughly, and the more I tried to divert my mind from my symptoms, the more fearful to me the aspects that my condition took on. I imagined

all sorts of things wrong with me. I saw the doctors, in their business of cutting away all of my troubles, leaving my body a yawning cavity, a sort of Mammoth Cave. "If only I had had it done in time!" I would say. But now it was too late. Disease had me in its grip, and I might as well give up—no use trying to buck what after all Fate or something had decreed for me. And—I refused to switch on the light!

"MEET THE DOCTOR!"

AN APPLE a day will keep the doctor away, according to a current legend. If the doctor happens to be a surgeon it takes a whole lot less than that to keep him away. Just a thought of him is enough to make most of us start shooing him away.

And what a picture it is that most of us have of the surgeon—a murderous soul, with a cold, fishy eye that gleams a ghoulish gleam when he sees the ambulance driving up at a mad speed; whose long, bony fingers begin to clutch at a long knife, whetted up to a razor edge, when he sees a customer coming; who has a crazy passion for taking people apart and putting them together again to see if they will still go; whose sole concern for a person is as to whether the surgeon before him left anything worth fussing about; who cuts one apart, then puts one together again and delivers what remains to the anxious friends, with a "Five hundred dollars, please!" about like a butcher would hand a cut of sirloin to a waiting customer, and with just about the same degree of humanity and personal concern.

The conception of the surgeon and his work may vary from the above in minor details, but in the main features it is an accurate picture I

have drawn. It was a conception that I myself had until I learned better through personal experience; it is a conception that most people hold, with the possible exception of the surgeon and his wife and his children, and possibly, though not necessarily, his grandchildren and his first-cousins. Relatives further removed would, we venture to say, join in the universal conception of the man as a sort of barber, with a barber's itch for hacking at people, plus a butcher's mania for carving and slicing.

There are several reasons for this attitude toward the surgeon, among them being the people who write funny things for the papers. The surgeon for these people is duck-soup. We fancy that if the surgeon hadn't otherwise come into existence, the humorists would have invented him, so pat is he to all the purposes of humor. We can all recall examples of this kind of humor, which, while it makes folks laugh, maybe, and thereby they grow fat, yet does not help to "sell" people on the thing that they most need to be sold on; namely, an operation that may be imperatively needed.

There is, for example, the story of the two young surgeons who fell to discussing the case that had come to one of them. "He came in just the nick of time," said the surgeon who had operated. "In another twenty-four hours the patient would have got well without it!"

Then there is the one about the villager who was rushed to the hospital with appendicitis. The local editor, keen for a news item, wrote up the account thus: "Our esteemed fellow townsman, J. Smith Carberry, will be operated upon to-morrow by Surgeon Cutter for appendicitis. He will leave a wife and five children."

And equally effective have been stories like the one about the epileptic who fell in a fit and was rushed to the hospital. Upon taking off his coat a nurse found a piece of paper pinned to the lining, which read: "This is to inform the house surgeon that this is just a case of fits, not appendicitis. My appendix has already been removed twice."

The stage has contributed its bit towards the misconception of the surgeon and his function, as also a disinclination in the minds of most people to ascertain the truth of a subject that they have been taught to regard as unpleasant.

The practicing physician has fared somewhat better. The Master has long been spoken of as the Great Physician, who healed both the sick body and the broken spirit, and this has helped throw about the office of the practitioner a certain halo of sentiment that has softened the popular attitude toward the physician. Writers like Balzac and Ian Maclaren, in their idealization of the doctor, have helped to build up a conception of the practicing doctor that is less

harsh than the picture of the surgeon that is so commonly held.

The true picture of the average surgeon is in such utter contradiction to all that the public holds that it is little short of tragedy that the truth is not known. I have recently been told of one of America's greatest surgeons, a man who has contributed much to the development of surgical technique, and whose name stands high in surgical circles, who never enters the operating room without first kneeling in his dressing room and offering a prayer to God that his hand may be kept firm and true, and that the lives of his patients may be vouchsafed him.

Then there is the picture given to me by a newspaper man who was sent to get an interview with one of the country's renowned surgeons, a man who has written any number of books on surgical methods. "I ruined my chances to get a good interview by first mentioning his achievements, and hinting at his greatness as a surgeon," the journalist told me. "For he blushed furiously and asserted that he had done nothing at all, and hadn't begun in his opinion to understand surgery, and he gave me to understand that the interview was over."

The self-sacrifice, the hardships, endured by surgeons who have given their lives to the work of medical missions in dark parts of the earth, where there was no hope of financial return or

glory, is testimony of the highest kind to the spirit that actuates a very large number of men in this profession.

The fact is that surgeons as a class have not "sold" themselves to the public, nor has anybody else tried to do it for them. The spirit of self-aggrandizement is not among them. In most commercial fields, in your line and mine, we have learned the value of publicity, and we employ experts to see that our names, or the names of our firms and products, are kept in the newspapers and magazines as constantly as possible. We contrive to get our names associated in the public mind with forward-looking movements, to the end that we shall be thought of as standing for progress and enlightenment.

This publicity, in the light of the more modern conception of salesmanship, seeks to do one of two things, or both: first, to sell, if it is a commercial line, say, a specific product; and second, to "sell" to the public the bigger idea of which the specific product is but an expression. For example, the up-to-date plumber will direct his publicity in such a way that the people will not only come to him for supplies and service, but also that they will become "plumbing conscious," that is, "sold" on the plumbing idea, becoming good-plumbing enthusiasts, and by their enthusiasm making other people want more and better plumbing.

All that is what surgeons have *not* done, and in the majority of cases by the very nature of temperament they could not do. It would be better for the world if they *could* think in terms of this modern publicity philosophy, for to sell the public on surgical attention would get thousands of men into the operating room at the time when they needed surgical attention—not years afterwards, after months or years of suffering, with lowered efficiency and impaired earning power.

The truth is that men do not go into the profession for fame or for wealth. They are drawn to it because—well, probably in most cases just because. "Some are born to be doctors!" That explains about all there is to be explained about it; doctors have the medical and the surgical sense, which is concerned with the study of why men become diseased and deformed, and how they may be relieved. No more than art does surgery offer returns of great magnitude; the returns are mostly in terms of satisfactions that come from feeling that they have relieved pain and suffering, and from fine technical achievement—and a doctor who gets his thrills from performing a particularly difficult operation in a particularly satisfying way, gets just about all the thrills that one man can use.

So far as selling surgery to the public is concerned, we might perhaps wish that the surgeon

could get at the thing from this larger point of view. And yet—if the surgeon were capable of ballyhooing for his profession and for his personal work, maybe he wouldn't be so good a surgeon—his science might suffer. I think also that a lot of the personal charm which I find among the surgeons I have recently come to know consists in certain qualities of reserve, of selflessness, of gentleness, of simplicity of character, that are utterly incompatible with aggressive methods of publicity, but that I would not want to see exchanged for all the advertising wisdom contained in all the advertising agencies and departments in the entire world.

I am of the opinion, therefore, that operations when they are needed will have to depend upon the enthusiasm of people who, like myself, have found years of added activity added to their lives, who have seen suffering disappear as if by magic, and who have found happiness come when they thought it had passed them by. At least we can help in correcting the popular picture of the surgeon as an ogre who gets you into his castle by stealth and there cuts you up with ghoulish delight, and hands what is left of you back to the beneficiaries of your will; we can at least do that, and show the surgeon as being what we ourselves have found him to be—a friend!

GRAY WALLS

IN MY CITY there are two places which I have frequent occasion to drive past. One is the jail, the other—one of the city's hospitals. I drive (or did up until I had my operation) a little faster when I pass these two places, usually looking the other way, and talking a little more rapidly to whatever person might be with me.

They were places that stood in my mind for something forbidding in our civic life. The jail stood for the majesty of the Law—my contacts with which had been confined to those instances when I had found a tag attached to my steering wheel, with something on it about violating the parking rules. Two dollars represented the extent of my villainy—a small sum, but still it was imposed by the Law, and I shuddered, when I passed the jail, to think how difficult it was becoming these days to keep out of it. People were in there for crimes hardly more heinous than the one for which I had squared myself for two dollars. I had visions of being picked up almost any day, now that the tags were becoming more and more frequent incidents in my life.

The hospital produced just about the same emotions in me whenever I passed it. People

were being incarcerated there, too, and for conditions in their bodies that were no more serious than my own. Some day they were going to get *me;* some doctor would become insistent, break down my resistance, and in I would go. I did not want to go there, and so another shudder as I passed by.

I thought I remembered going there, or to some other hospital, one time, to see a friend who had gone in for something or other. It may have been the jail, but I rather thought it was the hospital. Anyhow, my recollection, what there was of it, was not pleasant. I vaguely recalled going to the office and being led through corridors and wards, upstairs and more corridors—passing internes immaculate in their white coats, and nurses in white gowns and caps equally immaculate.

The silence impressed my mind forbiddingly. The silence—yes, it would be the hospital! I must have been in a critical mood, to object to the silence. I am not sure what I expected—whether a hurdy-gurdy on each floor, or a Paul Whitman orchestra. Anyhow, I did object, and the silence somehow became a symbol in my mind of the ghastliness of confinement in a hospital—the silence plus the immaculateness. If I ever owned a hospital I would have the nurses in some kind of Cossack get-up or something—lots of color around. And the beds would be—

not steel, the white kind that looked so grim and immaculate too, but some kind of colonial style, maybe, or even a four-poster.

The solemnity of the attendants fussed me, too, I recall. I wondered if these people *ever* laughed; and, if they did not, how they could be made to. Of course, it did not occur to me that one can be cheerful without laughing. I wondered what kind of effect I could produce by telling one of my favorite stories, until it came upon me that usually, even among my own people, my jokes fell like a pall upon the party—I was not sure, even, that some of the very people in these wards had not been victims of my attempts at amusing a group at some gathering. I felt, though, that the idea was sound; there were people who could set a Chautauqua audience roaring, and so I felt rather confident that a ward of sick people would be susceptible to humor of the right kind and in the right doses.

My net impression of hospitals, then, from my memory of some trip I had taken there (in addition to what I had heard and read, I suppose, and the activity of a vivid imagination as I passed the hospital down the other side of the city jail)—the impression which I had of hospitals, I say, was no more calculated than my conception of surgeons to lure me to an operation. There was something factory-like about it all; it somehow suggested production

methods to me—though why I should object to production methods here, when I was so enthusiastic about them in my own business, is something I cannot understand. Anyhow, I had visions of an assorted lot of say a dozen people being brought up in an ambulance, dropped onto conveying belts that took one this way, another one that way, with a nurse taking one's pulse here, another his temperature there, a doctor extracting something or other here, and so on, until the cashier did things to his wallet just as he was about to be landed out on the loading platform, ready for delivery to his home.

The personal equation was lacking—ah, that was it. I am not sure I knew just what personal equation meant; I am not sure that I do now; but anyhow, what I criticized in the hospital, as I conceived it to be, was its lack of the personal touch; there was something too cold, too exact, too scientific about it, I felt. The hospital as an institution might make a good ice-plant, but it somehow lacked color; the attendants lacked color, both in demeanor and in dress; and the appointments lacked color. Even the exterior lacked color, was forbidding, with the high gray wall that surrounded it, and the uninteresting quality of its architecture, which makes no attempts at decoration, but for the most part comprises broad areas of wall space broken only by long, even rows of windows.

Such was the hospital hazard that had been created in my own mind. I do not attempt to explain why I would hesitate to take my body there to be put in repair, when I took my financial problems to banks housed in equally forbidding places, and filled with people who were just as solemn and colorless as I felt the hospital attendants to be, and engaged in a whole lot less interesting work. No nurse could be half as silent as the bank president after listening to my story about the two-million downtown real-estate deal I wanted his bank to help me finance.

Again, downtown I kept my car in an immaculate new structure, where the attendants all looked alike and talked alike, and where the cars were lined up in neat, straight rows that look as though they were a built-in feature. Also one of my interests is in a line of products which, we boast in our advertising, are made in a snow-white factory, by snow-whitely clad people, whose hands never touch the products that are consumed by the people.

The greater part of our lives is spent in surroundings as colorless, as unromantic, as uninviting as those we complain about in the hospital. In fact, we insist upon these surroundings being so, and yet, after any number of years spent in daily contact with such conditions, we object to the hospital because it is not interesting! There are, it is true, the smells. I

myself hold no brief for iodoform and the like. But between the smell of iodoform and the smell of stale cigarette smoke which assails the caller in a vast number of offices, or the smell of smoke that belches forth from a nearby downtown chimney, or those indefinable smells to be found wherever one goes in our modern cities—between these and the iodoform, give me the iodoform every time.

The degree to which these objections to the hospital affect one's reluctance to have an operation will of course vary with the individual. Probably in no case is it the one determining factor. Rather it is one of the features in the picture that produce an aversion to the hospital and everything connected with it, and therefore it causes one to delay going until going cannot be put off an hour longer, after the delay has caused an incalculable amount of harm.

In my own case I just didn't want to have anything done; my mind was made up not to go, and out of a distorted conception of the surgeon, and his hospital and equipment background, I raised up a bogey that served me very well as an excuse for not going: let anybody suggest an operation to me, and I would sic my bogey on him, and he would not be apt to come back for another dose of it.

"ALL IS VANITY"

IT STRIKES me as strange that people who are so proud of their operations after they are performed should have to be fairly dragged to the operating room. It is the result, I suppose, of a laudable vanity that makes us ashamed to admit of physical weakness of any kind. In keeping silent about an ailment we are telling the world that we are the iron men; and then the operation comes along and we are able to point to it and say to our friends and associates, "And if you doubt how well I am, there is the operation to prove it."

It ought to work out this way, that as soon as we feel the need of an operation we will go out and get a nice new one, so that we would the sooner have our proof. But it doesn't work that way. We try to get away with something. We crack jokes about the doctors; we crack jokes about those of our acquaintances who have to be operated upon; we play golf and go off on hunting and fishing trips to demonstrate that we are he-men, fit as fiddles, and all that—and all the time we are kidding ourselves more than we are anybody else.

We are kidding ourselves chiefly because if we would own up at the right time to something

being wrong we could, with medical care, often avert the need for an operation. We do not go at it this way, though. We do not do what we do in the management of our businesses. Let a man in our sales department suddenly become a disturbing element and, if we find him hopelessly so, we do one of two things: we transfer him to a department where his abilities may be utilized and yet his harmful effect on our organization be nullified, or else we invite him to move on. We do not wait until the poison of his influence has spread to the entire organization, and a major operation is required and we have to fire everybody but ourselves—an operation that would be expensive in the extreme.

I am confident that I could have avoided my own operation in this way, by simply going to a physician. But I had the same feeling about the practicing physician that I had about surgeons. It not only took time to have a doctor looking after you all the time, but everybody else would know it, and I would be looked upon as a weakling. And people had enough other things to look at me about and smile, without that. There was my taste in cravats, for example. That was proverbial. I don't suppose I ever wore, except in formal dress, a tie that did not arouse the risibilities of my friends. I could spend five dollars for what seemed to me a faultless bit of neckwear; I could explain to the salesman my

weakness, and, as man to man, put him on his honor to hang on me a tie that would be proof against the critical eyes of my friends—only to be stopped half a dozen times in the next block and bantered about my cravat.

I think unconsciously I felt the need of keeping up an illusion about my health in order to counteract my evil reputation in the matter of cravats, and such minor shortcomings as what my friends regarded as an atrocious attachment to novels of the thriller type in the few hours of relaxation that my business gave me, or rather, that I permitted my business to give me.

Anyhow, from the start I shunned doctors in every form, who might have prevented the development of complications that finally made an operation unavoidable.

Moreover, the situation was aggravated in my own case by setting up a character for ruggedness and virility back there shortly after I first felt the symptoms coming on me that finally led to my operation. It was a case of starting a backfire. I had suddenly been shocked into a consciousness of being easily fatigued, too easily fatigued, and of a shortness of breath upon a degree of physical exertion that I would have laughed at a year before.

The correct step would have been to go and tell a doctor about it. He might have prescribed more sleep, and a change in my diet, and perhaps

cut down my tobacco allowance to two or three cigars a day. It was not the diet that kept me from doing the obvious thing; considering diet alone, I would have been willing to go on a bill of fare made up of potatoes and parsnips; I would willingly have gone to bed an hour or two earlier at night, falling into an easy sleep by the simple expedient of taking to bed with me a copy of the Congressional Record. I am not so sure about the cigars, but I half believe I could have risen to the occasion and accepted a ration of two or three cigars a day, provided they were not of the panatella shape and were black enough.

But no—this would have been an admission, to myself as well as to the world, that Jim Radley was approaching the doddering period—and though I might dodder, yet I wanted to make sure that nobody was going to know anything about it, doctors or anybody else.

So anxious was I to escape this character that I created another one—that of a strong man. A man among men; a man who could do his thirty-six holes of golf and come off the course feeling as fresh as when he first teed off; a man who hunted and fished and roughed it generally; a man who was in the pink of condition, whatever that was, as hard as nails; who could lick his weight in bobcats, and all that. Such was the character that I built up for myself, and it interests me exceedingly now that I was able to

establish it so easily. Everybody accepted Jim Radley as a he-man, one of those rugged guys with an iron constitution. The explanation is, undoubtedly, that I could thus easily establish the character because I so easily established it first of all with myself.

And of course when my own eyes began to be opened, and I sensed the need of something drastic being done, I was obliged to keep up the character that I had erected; I had built up a mythical Jim Radley that I could not very well kill off, and therefore I must keep up the illusion before my friends and acquaintances. I had backed up my "strong man" character with too much argument in behalf of the strenuous life in the outdoors to want my friends to jeer me when they saw me coming from the doctor's office.

Why, I could fairly see Charley Smith nudge Joe Brown, as I entered their office, panting from the exertion of climbing the short flight of stairs, as he whispered, "Now aren't you glad we didn't go with Jim on that fishing trip up into Quebec?" And then both would look at the double chin that had been slowly but surely growing, and then glance at the growing waist-band that had started to take on the aspect of an equatorial belt.

I have thus gone into the psychology of my pre-operation period because it is so important

a factor with so many of us fellows in putting off radical medical attention, thinking by some miraculous intervention to be able to avoid that attention entirely. It may take different forms in different instances. One may plead the press of business; another may say that the things that are obviously wrong with him are hereditary and never killed anybody yet, and so on. But in every case there appears the fatal practice of refusing to look facts in the face, and so putting off the day when surgical attention is necessary.

In my own case there is one slight extenuation of my delay; namely, that I did not know that an operation was necessary until twenty-four hours before I went to the hospital—or rather, was taken to the hospital. To offset this, though, is the fact that I would have known it if I had not for such a long time subscribed to the current notions about doctors and hospitals, and in my pride tried to cover up the fact that I was not the iron man that I tried to make myself out to be—and the further fact that when I did go it was not the result of any heroic determination on my part, but rather because complete collapse, and possibly even a trip to the Unknown, was immediately in front of me. It takes no iron will, no heroism, to determine one upon action in such a time of crisis. Except that it *was* a crisis, I might have been putting off the opera-

tion yet, even though I was told bluntly that sooner or later an operation would be necessary, and that the sooner it was done the sooner could I run in on Jones and Brown without panting and my face becoming flushed to the color of a July dawn.

But the crisis had arrived, and I soon reached the hospital, my mind made up for the—best!

THE SUMMONS

THE SUN was shining that morning, and it was summertime. I recall, because the northern trails were calling—calling for sure this time. I knew where the bass would be lying among the weeds up in a northern Wisconsin lake on such a day, and I knew just the lure that would appeal to them. On the other side of the lake, in a dead-water channel, pike were lying lazily along the sunken logs. A day like this, though, demanded fight, put fight into a man; I would let the pike lie there and go after the bass, where I would be sure of a struggle for the gods.

That was the kind of day it was, and these were the thoughts that ran through my mind, as I drove off to the office. I had half a mind to play hooky for a week. I had played hooky on impulses far less strong than this one. One or two department heads were off on vacations, however, and other important members of our staff were away, so that it seemed imperative for me to stay on the job.

At my desk I was congratulating myself on the iron will that enabled me to chain myself to my desk, when one of the boys called up and would I play a round of golf that afternoon?

I would! We left it that we would meet at the clubhouse at two o'clock.

I mention all this in detail because I want to show how weak my will was when there was a prospect of play; and because what immediately followed may show the way to other men who find it hard to get their minds made up on the business of going and getting it over with. For years I had sensed the need of something in the way of at least being looked into by a doctor—and now on this particular morning I seemed less likely than ever before to get anything done to myself. Here I was, with vital work to be done, and a mere hint of a golf game enough to send me skylarking out to the course. My will, I think, had reached just about its lowest ebb. . . .

And suddenly it hit. An hour later I was home and in bed, with a doctor making an appraisal of me—a thorough one. I was too sick to sense more than vaguely that he was there; too sick to care now whether the world knew what a physical sham I was; too sick even to think of caring. Will and pride had vanished completely in the sickness that wracked me.

Two hours before if any doctor had made a move to take my pulse I would have threatened him with a punishment that of course I would have been incapable of giving; but anyhow, I would have made the threat, and the doctor,

with a knowing smile, would have said he was sorry. Now, however, a doctor was actually taking my pulse and I didn't, couldn't care. He could have taken my watch and chain, the one with the lodge emblem on it, without any danger of protest from me.

And when he had taken my pulse and shaken his head at the story that he read there, he took my temperature and shook his head again at the story which the thermometer told him. He must have been an impressionable kind of doctor, for every story that he read in his appraisal of me was a subject for a shaking of his learned head. The stories may have been short, but they must have had a good plot, for they obviously affected him.

Then presently another doctor stood by the other one's side. They were talking in low tones, and asking questions of my wife—I suppose concerning my history from way back yonder. Her replies must have been satisfactory, I remember musing grimly to myself, for the doctors seemed even more impressed, and shook their heads with a seriousness that did not promise well for my immediate future. I could see that I was in for something, and wished they would stop shaking their heads and out with it. If it was the end I didn't care much, only I wanted to know about it as soon as possible. Long ago I had taken on a good load of insurance,

and my attorney had seen to it that my house was in order so far as my will was concerned.

Then suddenly the newcomer let his head come to a rest and said something of which I caught only one word. "Operation"!

Somehow, I had not quite expected that, and the shock brought me up with a start. I suddenly remembered all the stories I had ever heard about doctors who cut a guy up, for the sheer love of cutting him up. A great loathing came over me for this pair of butchers. My mind was thoroughly alive now, and I could get the line of their reasoning. One of them said something about it being "his only chance," and about my having a "fighting chance," but the chief thing to them was, I felt sure, that here was a chance for some more experiments.

Then one of them went into another room to use the telephone, and I began to plan in my mind a campaign of resistance. Never would I permit such an outrage. They couldn't come into a fellow's house like that and cart him away against his will and carve him up. It would be just as reasonable for one of those efficiency experts to come into my office and say, "See here, Radley, your business is being run at sixes and sevens. You are headed straight for the financial bow-wows. I'm taking affairs over from now on until I get you straightened out. My bill will be ten thousand dollars. You may

not have any business left when I get through, but I will get a million-dollar kick out of it, trying out a new organization theory on you." What I wouldn't do to such a guy—!

Then I began to plan ways and means. Should I get up and dress and walk out on them? Or should I call O'Bourne, the cop who covers our beat? I was glad I had been friendly to O'Bourne, and had given him the box of cigars last Christmas, and had slipped him a bottle of medicine for the cough that had come upon him one cold, wet night. Yes, all things considered, I would best call O'Bourne, for there would be some action then. I even smiled to myself as I pictured O'Bourne sailing into these two babies and setting them outside the door. I would caution him against going too far; just a crack on the jaw and a little rough-housing generally would be enough.

But just as I pictured O'Bourne depositing the doctors in the spirea bushes that grow just outside the door, I caught the sound of a motor being driven up the walk, and heard the brakes bring it to a stop. The door bell rang. Five minutes later the car was under way again, swinging down the drive. And I was in it! I was on the way to the hospital. There had been no time to summon O'Bourne. I would have done better to get up and walk out of the house on the doctors.

At the hospital I learned that the experiment on me would be held some time next day. The delay got me fighting mad all over again. Why, if they were going to do things to me, didn't they cut into me at once? But the interval that ensued until the operation proved to be the greatest blessing that could have come to me. It was really the point of this history. If the case had been something acute, like appendicitis, I suppose they would have hurried me into it at once. But for reasons that are mysterious in a way to all but doctors and nurses, it was advisable to get me in the best possible trim for the ordeal. Anyhow, there was the wait, and by this time I was becoming resigned to my fate.

Presently, as things began to be done to me by way of preparation, I found my mind getting squared away, and presently I was building up a picture of my situation.

"The fact is, Jim," I was saying to myself, "you are going to be operated on. You may not like it; you may not like the fact that you are being forced into it willy-nilly. But by the great horn spoon, you have brought it on yourself. Posing all over the place all these years as an iron man, and all the time knowing something was wrong, and yet refusing to find out what it was before it was too late.

"And now there is just one thing to do, old

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man," I went on, "and that is to face the music. You have never had an operation before. Life has been getting a little dull for you; you have complained more than once about it getting to be old stuff for you—a little frayed around the edges. Life doesn't pack any more kicks for you; it is like going to see a moving picture built around a story that you know by heart—you know what the end is going to be before the orchestra starts playing 'Hearts and Flowers.'

"But here, Jim, is something entirely new. You are going to be put to sleep, and the doctors are going to do a lot of things to you, and when you wake up and get going again, you are going to be different from any Jim Radley you have ever been. You will be a stronger man—at least you couldn't be any weaker; and you will probably see a lot of things differently from what you do now, because you will have been so close to Eternity that you could look over the gates and see whether they had any bunkers on their golf courses—if you hadn't been put to sleep.

"All in all, Jim, it is going to be the greatest thing that has ever come your way, except when you fell in love and were married, and when your children came. (Being born is usually something of an event, though it wasn't so blamed important in your case, old-timer.) Open your eyes, then, to the fact that you are face to face with Adventure! Greet it as a friend, as a great

opportunity. Don't miss any of the thrills, no matter what form they make take—and they may take some surprising forms before you are through. You may have to readjust some of your ideas afterwards, but you will get some thrills maybe out of *that*, too."

I was probably more sick than even the doctors thought, to take such an astonishing (astonishing for me) attitude toward an event that I had always determined would not come into my life. But the decision was one of the best things that has ever come into my life, and I am recording it all because I hope that my experience may induce other men in a position similar to mine to prompter action when need demands than I did.

Anyhow, my mind was thoroughly made up. I was going to make a business of being sick for a few days. We have read a lot about making it a business of being well and keeping so. Well, here I was flat on my back, and I was going to make it a business of being *sick*.

It seemed to me there were two ways of being sick. First was just to be sick; letting them come in and lug you off to the hospital and cut you up; and when this was done to let the nurses give you such medicines and foods as would bring you around after awhile without your having anything to do about it. This I thought of as the "passive" way of carrying on your

sick spell. You merely took whatever the doctor ordered and what the nurses gave you, and maybe you pulled through, and maybe you didn't. If you "went out," as they say down in Texas, you just went out, with a lily on your chest that you hadn't earned. A lot of men run their businesses that way—taking whatever comes along; without putting up a fight when times are tight, and if an accident comes along and brings unexpected success they do not get any kick out of it because they didn't earn it. They are the lads who play golf the same way and go around in 125; they play poker the same way and next day have to take up their I O U's; they fish after the same style, and have to buy a string of bass at the fish market to keep the family from kidding them when they get home.

I had always been in the habit of making a business of whatever I engaged in, and it seemed to me that here was a chance of working out a good way of being sick, if you *had* to be sick; that is, make it my business while I was at the hospital. And that is the "active" way of being sick, as I now call it.

And I was going to make this new business I was engaged in pay me dividends—that is, dividends in terms of lessened pain, owing to the fun I would get out of the experience; in terms maybe of dispensing a little cheerfulness and happiness in this place where probably there

was not too much of it floating around; in terms of making the work of my doctors and nurses lighter by helping them to get me well; in terms of getting an insight into this new world that I was suddenly injected into; and in terms of learning something about myself, about how to keep myself in better trim so that maybe I would not have to play a return engagement at this stand, and if I did have to come back that it might be at least with a new act!

THIS new attitude toward the business in hand brought an amazing peace of mind. Here was I, who had regarded doctors and nurses as mortal enemies, ghoulish creatures going around seeking people on whom they could vent their blood-thirstiness, now looking upon them as friends. They were making it possible for me to go through a new experience, something that I had never known before.

I had gone through just about every other known human experience. I had run up against more than one financial and business crisis; I had made it possible for my business to weather more than one financial storm; I had won over to my support banking interests that first had looked upon my projects as nothing short of hair-brained; I had outsmarted more than one business competitor.

Also I had traveled and seen the world beyond, I dare say, most business men, and had found recreation in all sorts of sports and games. I had courted contacts with new phases of life, not only for amusement, but for their educational value. I have always believed that the more kinds of men one knows in business through personal association, and the more varied and

the greater the range of one's experience, the better judge one was sure to be of men, and the better able one would be to form wise judgments when confronted with new conditions.

And now I was facing my operation in the same way, only with a zest that was new to me. I was by now completely "sold" on the idea of this operation, and nothing could have tempted me to forego it.

One of the compensations of this new state of mind was, doctors have since told me, that it made the task of the surgeons and nurses a great deal easier, and hastened my own recovery. A lot of people go into the experience with fear in their hearts. And fear, while it may not end tragically, yet is a handicap, they tell me, towards recovery. Others go into it with their minds rebelling against the operation, just as I came near doing, and this is a handicap just as severe. And still others take a fatalistic attitude towards it, convinced that they are scheduled to cash in their chips while they are under an anesthetic anyhow, and therefore when they can't have anything to say about it.

But then, death catches up on men in so many strange conditions that for the life of me I can't see that chancing an operation is much different from chancing a twenty-foot putt that you need to halve the hole. One time I heard of a man who was playing a high-stake game of poker.

Something like thirty thousand dollars was in the pot, and finally he was "called." His four kings were enough, and he dropped dead. Dropped dead, mind you, and winning, too. If he had lost it would have been something to drop dead about. That man undoubtedly felt certain all through the betting that just so sure as he was called he would be looking at somebody's four aces—and it was the sudden surprise that killed him. If he had started the betting in a more light-hearted way, knowing he was going to win, and not giving a hang anyhow if he lost, he would be living to-day—unless he had taken to moonshine, where states of mind don't make so much difference, since it gets you anyhow.

And I think it is rather true in battle, too, that it is the man who is afraid that is apt to collect the machine-gun bullets and splinters from the bombs, rather than the man who goes into the fight with a light heart, preferring to live, of course, to dying, not paying much attention to that, though, but getting a lot of fun out of the fighting. I am not so sure about this, because I have never been in a battle—but anyhow, that is the experience of the heroes in the story books.

My point is that just before an operation cheerfulness and optimism pay. It is, I think, to be regretted that the patient cannot before an operation, and during it, be given, as part of

his preparation for the ordeal, one of Charlie Chaplin's films, Buster Keaton, or whoever one's favorite comedian may be. Or while they are taking pictures of his insides, that they don't attach a Charles Ray film to their X-Ray machine. Let me laugh at a Chaplin caper and they could take out my funny bone and I would still be laughing when I came out from under the anesthetic.

I am not certain, too, that a hospital could not well have a cheer leader. If a college-student body needs one on going into a game where their team has at least an even chance to win, how much more does a man need one where he is severely handicapped.

Sis boom wah,
Patient!
Ether, incision,
Snip, snip, lesion!
Operation—
Hospital!

Unless, of course, such a battle-cry might make the patient more depressed, which is the effect that college yells are as apt as not to produce just before the home-coming game commences.

Another compensation which I derived from this new attitude towards the coming operation was that it got me interested in my own mind

and its workings. I had never been introspective; I had my business to conduct, which if I was to be successful meant that I was to be more interested in the workings of other men's minds than my own. I can guess pretty accurately what is going on inside a man's mind when he comes into my office to unfold a plan whereby I can make fifty thousand dollars in a deal, or comes to prove that he can save me money on his supplies over the house we are buying from. If he is a good salesman he probably knows as accurately what is going on inside *my* mind. And the chances are that neither of us knows much about his own mind, or is interested much in knowing.

But here I was, shut off from the world. All contacts with that world were suddenly cut off, and the study of my thoughts, and the growth of my new optimism under my attitude towards the operation, absorbed me completely. The fact that I had suddenly become eager about my coming experience completely fascinated me, and I worked the reason for it out in my mind. The fact that I could lie in bed and look up at the white walls, a situation that would have bored me beyond measure before, and get a kick out of just thinking about things, astonished me, and I was sorry that I had not made the discovery a long time ago.

In short, I found my mind quite an interesting

place to snoop around in. Odds and ends of impressions about people whom I had met I found there, and sketchy thoughts about life, and its whys and wherefores, memories of places I had been in, plays I had seen and music I had heard, and the effect on me of silent places I had been in up towards the Arctic Circle on hunting expeditions. And I found myself piecing these together into some kind of pattern, or system, so that I was beginning to build up a certain attitude towards life in general, a sort of personal philosophy—which may not have been much of a philosophy, but which was better than not having any, for now I can see that some kind of philosophy is a good thing for any man, no matter how much of his time may be taken up with the details of his business—or with golf and fishing.

Yes, I became quite pals with myself, my own mind. I think it is bad when a man becomes self-centered. But my sudden interest in the workings of my own mind did not tend towards self-centeredness. It becomes just a pleasing game, and the outcome is that in understanding one's own mind one becomes better able to judge of others and their motives, more ready perhaps to get the other man's point of view at times, which is a good thing too.

Meantime I knew that preparations were going on for the operation. I was on a diet that would

put me in better condition for the event; I was being watched and reported upon; steps had been taken to relieve me of the distressing pains that had first struck me, and welcome periods of sleep had come.

And all this time silent-footed attendants were coming and going, ministering to my needs with a quiet unobtrusiveness that was beautiful. Doctors, internes, nurses—how different from the pictures that I had harbored in my mind of them. They had smiles for me, gentle kinds of smiles, with a touch of wistfulness in them that was, however, not pity so much as an expressed wish that they might go through it for me. Not one but would, I am sure, have done that very thing, and gladly, if it would have worked.

I have been used to smiles, of course. But they have been the smiles of friends and of the folks at home—and goodness knows they know enough about you to smile at! Then there are the smiles, the forced, artificial smiles of head clerks and people in your organization, who put them on when they come into your office, or the smiles of traveling men who want to sell you something.

But here were people who had nothing to sell me, who had no fear of me in my capacity as "the boss"; who did not smile because they were friends or family, and therefore generous and overlooking of faults.

And the self-effacement of it all! The utter absence of "side" and self-conceit. I thought of the young dandy in my shipping department, who hadn't an idea inside his pomaded cranium, a sheik who had the most amazing lure for our stenographic staff—and who had about as much self-effacement and natural modesty as a peacock. And I thought of my personal stenographer, who might serve, brains and all, as a wax model for Parisian gowns in a department store window —and who high-hatted everybody else in the organization because of her self-appropriated title of "private secretary to Mr. Radley."

And alongside the scatter-brains of this kind, who make up so large a proportion of our population, to place these competent, efficient, highly trained folks, who dispense their ministrations with a quietness, a thoughtfulness, that comes from the heart! I think that to discover that a class of people like this exists was alone worth going through the operation.

More credit was due these people, too, I felt, because constant association with sickness and pain might naturally tend them to become hard and unsympathetic.

Nor was their gentleness the result of religious training. I learned afterwards, on going into the matter with my nurse, that there were probably as many people among them who did not go to church as there were who did. And it

would be impossible, on the basis of conduct or quality of the humanity which they showed, to tell which ones went and which did not.

For that matter, though, I did not bother much about analyzing the fact: I was content to be a beneficiary of the kindliness, the gentleness, of these wonderful people. Probably folks like these just naturally became doctors and nurses, while people of the other kind became—well, the kind that we all meet up with in the daily grind of our business.

GOING, GOING, GONE!

"WHAT do they think of when they go under, Doc?"

Somehow it had got in my mind that while the surgeon is taking out of the unconscious patient a broken mainspring or something, the latter is having some kind of glorified dream, or maybe a nightmare.

"What kind of a dream would you like?" asked the doctor, smiling at me.

"Oh, something like catching a twenty-five-pound musky on that new four-ounce rod of mine, or—"

The doctor replied, knowingly, "They're the kind that always get away, you know. We'll have you fixed up so that you can try the old whip, though, in just a few weeks. But you won't dream about the muskies while we're working on you. You won't dream much about anything. But we are going to fix you up so that you'll have plenty of dreams, good ones, after you are around again—dreams of doing things you've never thought yourself capable of doing before. And you'll make them come true, too, if you want to. We are not going to just tinker you up; we are going to make a new man out of you entirely."

The doctor's statement about my not being

able to dream about muskies, though, was a sort of challenge. As though a guy couldn't dream about muskies any time he wanted to. I would show him just for that. I had got to that point in my interest in my mind machine where I was anxious to see just what it would do at a time like this, and I began to work out a plan whereby I could carry part of my consciousness over into the sleep. The plan I arrived at was this: that when they began to give me whatever it was they were going to give me, I was going to be thinking hard about that little lake up in Wisconsin, where I knew the muskies were lying in wait for me, and where I could baptize that new rod in a very jubilee of action. I actually became impatient for them to start, so that I could try out my experiment.

I must have smiled as I worked on my little game, for one of the nurses mentioned it, remarking that few patients find it a time for being cheerful, but that it would be better for them if they did. I did not tell her about the little trick I was planning, but asked how soon the curtain would go up on our little show.

"Oh, it is nearly over," she said. "The first act was all that time you spent in getting where you had to have the operation; the second has been here, getting you ready; the third act will be where you, the hero, dash madly onto the stage—"

"Asleep!" I broke in, and came as near laughing outright as my condition would allow.

I mention the incident because if anybody had told me back in the other days that I would ever laugh on the threshold of an operating room I would have got him a life membership in the Ananias Club.

I am not going to burden my story with the details of my operation, not only because what happened would be merely hearsay, but also because any good medical journal will give the reader details of operations in far more exact language than I could give; and besides, my operation was nothing to brag about. It was a plain, simple affair, without any of those elaborate frills and decorations that distinguish a lot of the more pretentious kind. Since my own operation I have read the accounts of a few such, and they make me almost ashamed that after all my years of preparation I could not stage something more showy. Why, a lot of people can eat a half dozen bluepoints, washed down with something out of a flask, and have an operation that will require a five-page description in the American Medical Journal, whereas I, after years of flagrant violation of nature's laws, could only achieve one that would seem padded out even in a column. Why, I read even of a mere farmer over in Illinois who had something so wrong with him that the surgeons had

to invent a special kind of technique for the operation. And here was I, a citizen of half a million people, and accustomed to putting over sizable deals, managing only to get an operation so simple that a child could understand it—a child at least who was familiar with the uses of needle, thread, and scissors. In a convention of people who had been operated on, ranking alphabetically according to the complexity of their operations, I would have hard work making the Z grade, and would be so far from the speaker's stand that they would have to put in loudspeakers for me to hear.

Of course, that was not the doctors' fault, yet it is sometimes embarrassing for me, when I mention my operation and tell what happened, to have a little old man say "Huh!" That is always my cue to duck, if I can get away; it tells me that the little old man also has been through it, but that he had an eight-page and continued on page 59 kind of operation. Like as not he would show me a hole in the top of his head the size of a five-dollar gold piece and proceed to tell me about it, only his language is not so concise as a surgeon's, and his narrative would expand into a two-volume affair. My only compensation is that I am here writing about my operation in a book, and the little old huh men have not thought of that. And I can only hope that my effort will not result in a

deluge of books written by people who have been operated upon for floating ribs, or kidneys even more floating.

But if I have failed to provide the material for a dramatic and thrilling operation, one that would cause my name to go down in surgical annals, yet my hospital provided a setting worthy of the most ambitious affair. The trustees of the hospital had provided everything that science could name for the welfare and treatment of the patients that came there. From the time he enters until he leaves the patient receives the benefit of the most skillful and careful planning. If a spot of dust ever enters the environs of the place, it is only by being smuggled in. Beams of light shine in through the windows, but there are no motes dancing up and down in them. Ample facilities for antisepsis (that word ought to convince the reader beyond doubt that I have been rummaging around among the medical magazines) make it impossible for germs (note here how I refrain, in sympathy for my reader, from saying "bacteria") to get a foothold, while no sounds ever reach the precincts of the place from the busy city that lies at the foot of the hills on which the structure rests.

Strange as it may seem, I had never seen the hospital until I was brought to it for this operation, but one glance at it and I was glad that I had not been taken to the hospital down near

the jail. One passes between two pillars into a driveway leading through the trees to a colonnade that connects two beautifully designed structures and leads into a broad stretch of green, around which are grouped other buildings. The very arrangement of the place suggests quiet and peace, and I am sure helped to a very great degree in building up the psychological background for my operation that made it so nearly a pleasure for me.

Modern hospitals are paying more and more attention, I believe, to the value which physical background plays in the treatment of patients. The physicians appreciate the importance of architecture and other things as factors in the psychology of the patient—and my own opinion is that they are just as important factors in the psychology of the staff, making doctors and nurses (especially the nurses, since they must spend all of their time there) more efficient and happier.

Certainly the hospital, most carefully planned with reference to the pleasing quality of its architecture, with due thought also to its location, will evoke the more enthusiasm from the patient. One can easily imagine two men discussing their operations.

"I had a gastric operation performed at St. Luke's."

"Huh!" from another huh-er. "I had a gastric operation performed at St. Mark's."

And that would effectively silence the man from St. Luke's, since he would know that St. Mark's had been pronounced an architectural miracle and was a show-place of the city. And folks who run hospitals should know that all an ex-patient needs is some such point of superiority in his place to become the best publicity medium it could possibly have. . . .

And then the nurse came in, and I knew from the look of wistfulness on her face that my hour had come. I asked her, and she told me that it was so. She said something about everything was going to come out all right, and not to worry, and I said something about if she only knew how eagerly I looked forward to it! I said nothing about the trick I was going to play on the doctor, however.

In half an hour I was in the whitest room, with the whitest fittings and the whitest-gowned people, I ever had seen. I was stretched out on a table, and an attendant was fitting something over my face from which I was to breathe deeply. And I was thinking of a quiet cove on a blue lake up there in Wisconsin where the muskies lie among the lily pads and the pickerel weeds. I had my new four-ounce rod of split bamboo, with a lure on the end of the line that no Wisconsin musky could possibly resist. Z-z-z— The reel was singing under my cast, a gentle splash as the lure struck the water, and—

THAT ONE GOT AWAY

I HAD the corner room on the third floor of a hotel one time. It was a busy city, and the corner was the center of the downtown activities. About three o'clock in the morning I was aroused from a deep sleep by a strange medley of sounds beneath my window. I suppose they were the gongs of arriving fire engines, and the honking of automobiles, and the shouting of firemen, the blowing of whistles, and what not. From the total noise, however, I could not, in the confused state of my mind, distinguish any one sound, and in fact made no attempt to. After several seconds of bewilderment it came to me that a fire was outside, and I rose to investigate.

This better than anything else describes the sensation I experienced on coming out of the anesthetic. There was, I suppose, pain, but at first this was probably translated, in the confusion of my mind, as part of the noise—noise that shot through my head like darts of light. Even any nausea that may have been present must have been translated in the same way, for in those few first minutes I was conscious (semi-conscious would be more accurate) only of noise; as though my head were some kind of noise factory. Then I remembered the cast I had made for the bass.

"Did he strike?"

I opened my eyes and over me bent a nurse, adjusting the chart that held my records. She did not understand the allusion, of course, and answered, softly,

"No, not very hard."

The doctor had been right—they didn't dream while they were under!

The shower of noises was fast subsiding in my head, and when I had assembled my train of thought, I asked, feebly, if everything was all right. The nurse indicated, by fingers placed over her lips, that I was not to talk, but she nodded her head in such an emphatic manner that I knew all was well.

I recall feeling somehow that I had been cheated. Important things had been done to me when I was absent and could not help! I almost wished that they hadn't given me an anesthetic, since I couldn't finish my cast in the landing of a dream musky. But it was all right about that musky. Like as not it would have turned out to be a sleepy-eyed pickerel that I would have scorned to take to camp. For presently I fell into a long and restful sleep that was filled from start to finish with the big babies —fifty-pounders, sixty-pounders, fish that I could not get in the boat and had to tow into camp—big fellows with a zest for battle that sent the blood racing through the veins, and

strikes that came with the speed of lightning. Never was there such fishing, I believe, such hospital fishing anyhow, and my hospital can claim the record—and can challenge all other hospitals to come within a mile of it.

It was next day sometime that I woke up. The exertion of fishing must have been tremendous, for my first thought was of how famished I was. In my first hazy thoughts I expected to see "Louie," my old guide, call me to eats, and I could fairly smell the musky that he had upon the grill. And I called out, so loud I am sure the entire staff must have heard,

"And I want a barrel of coffee, Louie!"

The nurse could not stifle a laugh, and I came thoroughly to.

"When do we eat, nurse?" I asked, and she thought she could fetch me something presently, if I remained quiet. She went out, and returned in a few minutes with a dish of—broth! A thin, watery kind of broth—for me who had been smelling Louie's musky on the grill and been calling for a barrel of strong coffee.

But if never had I been so hungry, famished, never also had food tasted so good, been more satisfying. And then were to come, as marking steps in my progress, fruit juices and gruels, until I began to regain my complete self-respect on a diet of things that Louie himself could have thrived on.

When I had finished the broth my gaze wandered until it rested upon a vase of flowers. Roses I supposed they were. That is what they sent to sick folks I remembered, from bits of conversation that I used to hear. Flowers had meant nothing in my life, except to order over the telephone on such occasions as my wife's birthday and other festive occasions. Whether they ever arrived or not I wouldn't know, because I never paid the least attention to them. For all I knew they might fill my order with hollyhocks or spring beauties. I simply had never been aware of flowers.

But I was aware of *these* flowers. The jar had been set on a stand near a window, where the tips of their petals caught the light, with the softest and most startlingly beautiful shadows nestling in the hearts of the blossoms and under the leaves. And the room, I suddenly discovered, was filled with the scent of them.

Then my glance wandered across the room and fell upon another jar, and still another one. White and red ones. These others though wouldn't be roses; anyhow they were not like the other ones.

The nurse observed my absorption with the flowers and said, "From your home, and from friends. Roses," nodding toward the jar beside the window, "from Mrs. Radley, and the carnations," and she indicated the others, "from—"

and she crossed the room and read from the cards the names of friends.

I mention this, not because I want to diaryize my convalescence, but because I want to point out one more thing that my operation did for me: to leave me with an appreciation of simple things. For me to learn even the difference between roses and carnations was an event of the first magnitude—but to reach the point where any kind of a flower gave me a thrill was little short of miraculous. I cannot say much for thin broths, but with this single exception, all of the foods that were given me during my convalescence I still can eat with a relish; and aside from the dandelions that clutter up my lawn, I might have been the inventor of the flower idea, so thoroughly was the love for them laid in the first few hours of my convalescence.

Yes, I had made up my mind to make a business of being sick, and here in this suddenly acquired love of flowers I was receiving a wonderful return on my investment. I was, of course, in an impressionable condition. I am never surprised now when I read of a patient falling in love with the nurse who attends him through convalescence. Everything that ministers to one's comfort during that period, that rouses any sentiment, becomes a part of his very life from that time on.

And in these very facts I find the most con-

vincing evidence of the genuinely Christian spirit that animates my hospital and its control: that while it is supported by a religious body that is distinctly evangelical, yet from the beginning to the end of my stay there, never did I hear a word mentioned of religion; nor a suggestion of proselytism; no use of the physical cure as a basis for a "follow-up" campaign for the welfare of the soul.

The business man recognizes this as evidence, of course, of the highest kind of selling intelligence. "Convalescents," he would say, "don't want to be preached at or to; preaching would only irritate them and disgust them. But they do want to have attentions paid them, and they are easily sold on whatever gratifies that desire. If it is a religious group that is back of the hospital, as in your case, of course they are sold on that group."

My answer to which is, that in this case at least the religious group would hardly have hired as its agents a staff of attendants who were, as I learned, made up in considerable part of people who made no pretense at religion. And anyhow, I would be perfectly willing to become sold on any religious idea that manifested all the way through the kindliness, the unobtrusive gentleness, the self-effacement displayed by all who ministered to me during those weeks.

"VISITING HOURS—2 TO 3"

ROBINSON CRUSOE on his desert island was hardly more isolated from the world—his world—than I was from mine. He had his Friday, who was all right for making footprints, but wouldn't help much under modern hospital conditions. Even on Crusoe's island I think I would have preferred being alone. To have somebody drop down on me, as Friday did, sort of solves one's problems of aloneness, and one is deprived of the necessity of himself getting busy and finding a way out. Half of the fun that I had thus far derived from my hospital experience had come from having to face the fact that I was obliged to be operated upon, and that I was cut off utterly from the world that I had known.

Robinson, of course, suffered from not being much of a fisherman. As long as a fish remained in the ocean I believe I would have worked out ways of landing at least the edible ones; the harder they were to catch the more entertainment I would have got out of the business. And, lacking Louie's culinary skill, I would have taught myself interesting ways of cooking them.

Being cut off from contacts with my old world, however, taught me one thing that Crusoe

would have learned if he hadn't been so bent upon escape from his island. It taught me how relatively unimportant I was in the world in which I had thought myself cutting quite a figure. My business was going ahead, I felt sure, just as well without me as it had with me—I had been careful to train men into getting my points of view in business matters, into looking at a new proposition just as they knew I would if I were there. In fact, I had some time ago let myself out of the place where I was indispensable, though I had not sensed it until now, when I had time to think it over.

This sudden discovery, though not so gratifying to my pride, was yet a tonic to my sense of humor. And a sense of humor is rather necessary to a complete enjoyment of life. I don't believe it is the best aid to the building up of a successful business; in fact, it might even be a handicap; a man with a sense of self-importance that no one in the whole world could possibly live up to very often "brings home the bacon," as the saying goes, where a person less serious would lose out. But my business was successfully established; unless I had Napoleonic ideas of using my organization as a nucleus around which to gather in all other businesses in my line, until I should become an "industrial giant," there was no need of working so hard from now on as I had in the past. I could afford

now to laugh a little more, to play a bit more—and certainly to turn back to the world, with interest, some of the kindness, the humanity, that had been shown to me in these few hours at the hospital. Here, then, was one of the returns on my investment in this business of being sick.

And my new discovery worked both ways, too. If it gave me a new slant on my own value to the world, it also taught me the relative unimportance of a great many things that I had regarded as so vital to my existence. A State primary campaign even at that moment was going on, and as a good party man I would have been out in the front ranks getting excited, and feeling that my eternal happiness depended on putting our man over. But though we (or rather the rest of the boys) put our man over in the primaries, he was defeated in the election, and the world wags on just the same. And newspaper scareheads, the standing of my home-town team in the National League pennant race, the condition of the French franc—somehow they were'nt such vital factors in my life after all.

When I got back home I probably would let my tailor dictate to me as to what kind of Tuxedo I should wear at dinners the coming winter, or the particular style of full dress at the more ambitious affairs, and I would let my chauffeur drive me to work—when I did work. But

my tongue would be in my cheek while I was doing it; I would laugh at the show part of it all; I would not kid myself into believing that it was essential to my happiness. And—I would somehow contrive to fit it in with doing a lot of things that I would want to do because there was fun in it for me. Atlantic City would not see me merely because my "set" were going there, if Louie and the Wisconsin lakes happened to be calling—which they probably would be.

Just how resolute I will be when the tests really come I am not sure. For I am writing all this too soon after my convalescence. But at least I have the purpose and that is something. . . . Yes, dividends from my business of being sick were piling up.

Oh, yes, convalescence has its physical drawbacks. One *is* sick. One expects that. But—each day one is getting stronger, and there is less of the pain and the illness. And—the kindness and thoughtfulness of the nurses and the physicians is something of an anesthetic in itself. I have read somewhere of doctors performing operations, where an anesthetic is impossible, to the accompaniment of music. I believe the music would be superfluous at my hospital, so contagious is the kindness and consideration there, so dulling to pain.

As a matter of fact, I believe the doctors here mistrust the value of music as a reliever of pain,

for I was pretty well on my way to recovery before they let me have any of it. And then it was the radio, and I was permitted to hear it with a manner that said, "You are strong enough now to hear some music." I think, though, they overestimated my strength, for the jazz things that sometimes came across the air would have required a stronger condition than mine was to endure without hardship.

I am not averse to music; I am, in fact, rather devoted to it; but any music just at that time would have sounded discordant and harsh alongside Doctor Miller's "Good morning, Mr. Radley. I hope you are feeling still better," and, looking at a chart in confirmation of what the nurse had told him, adding, "for you *are* better. And it is a beautiful day out, and *you'll* soon be out, too," with his voice dying away in a merry laugh.

And the nurse's greeting was as much of a symphony. She was from Kentucky, I think she told me, and there was a note of the sunny South in her laugh, as she rallied me about the spinners and midirons that were always getting mixed up in my dreams—in spite of my solemn declaration that I never talked in my sleep.

I think, though, that the nurse's voice was most musical when she would come into the room from taking the flowers that friends had sent me around to the rooms of patients less blessed with indulgent friends than I, patients

especially who were at the hospital as the beneficiaries of some benevolence or other.

"I have one hundred and twenty-nine thank-yous for you, Mr. Radley," she would laugh. "The nine were from a poor little woman in sixty-seven, widow of a day laborer, with only a sixteen-year-old son to care for her. If you could only have seen her face break into smiles as I brought the flowers in to her, Mr. Radley—"

And she would go on to tell about the little crippled kid in one of the wards, who had been brought here as a forlorn hope, and how his eyes devoured the flowers, never leaving them all the time she was in the room— "and he probably is looking at them yet, and will be until he drops asleep again," added the nurse.

And before she had finished telling me about it all, a tear or two were in her eyes, and a lump was in my throat, and I was ready to tell the world that making a business of being sick pays marvelous dividends.

Then, too, accompanied by the same lilt of the South, came, in fragments, the story of the young girl's ambition to become a nurse; of how she had struggled against odds of poverty to get an education that would admit her to a training school; and of how she not only supported herself while earning a nurse's diploma, but actually gained in health and strength while doing it, for she had not been overly strong.

Here was a purpose, a devotion to an ambition, that was new to me. I had always supposed that people became doctors and nurses and artists and things like that which were out of my line, like girls became stenographers and boys became shipping clerks—because these are such easy and obvious things to do. But here I was, suddenly confronted with Ambition and Ideals. Here was somebody who, with a small fraction of the effort and time which she had spent on becoming a nurse, could have been my stenographer; whose smile would have been permanently wrecked by the constant chewing of the stenographic gum, and who, instead of the modest and becoming uniform, would have been half garbed in a cheap frock that missed her knees by an inch.

Ambition! Ideals! I was adding new words to my vocabulary. Hereafter I would have a new respect for the young people whom I saw frequently of evenings, books under their arms, on their way to our night high schools; and the young men and women who were "slipping 'em off the arm" at restaurants where I might lunch, who in this way were earning money to help pay their way through our University—there would be a new note of respect in my voice as I gave them my order—and possibly a little larger tip.

Making a business of being sick? I had started

my hospital career with the intention of getting something out of my stay in terms of dividends, and here in these fragments of the nurse's story, and the insight I was gaining into the human heart, I had been paid returns that never could be measured by money.

Then there were the internes, who, I gathered from things the nurse told me, could, most of them, have told much the same story—of ambitions, and hard work and struggle to achieve them. There was one young man especially who I felt certain who could have told a story to thrill every boy in America with an ounce of ambition in him. But somehow our talk, on the few occasions when we could talk, had to do with what the nurse told me was a hobby of his—health, and how people can keep it so as never to have to go to hospitals and doctors. The things he told me about eating, for example, when I got home—what to eat and how much (or how much not to), and when and why and how; and things about exercise; and getting lots of sleep, with the windows wide open; and about not worrying, and thinking optimistic thoughts, and so on, would fill a book if I cared to write them all down. For the young chap's remarks were told with so much enthusiasm that I hung on his every word, and I believe I could produce them almost verbatim. He told me, I recall, that if I did these things, and also did *not* do a

lot of things he told me about, I could live to be a hundred years old just as well as not. This thought is not especially alluring to me, yet I believe, unless my resolution fails me, I will do some of these things and add a few years at least to the span of my life, just as the result of the young interne's contagious enthusiasm. . . . Yes, making a business of being sick is a bonanza!

I have no illusions that my eagerness to hear and learn was the *only* cause of the interest which the interne took in instructing me. I observed him now and then casting interested glances in the direction of my nurse when she was not looking—and she at him when *he* was not looking, too.

And he found excuses for calling with increasing frequency, so that if I had stayed another ten days I should have been able to pass a college examination in hygiene, or perhaps I would have learned how to live to be a hundred and *fifty* years old. But to have been the means by which these young people became interested in each other was a satisfaction that really ought to be posted in my ledger under the heading of dividends. . . .

And then one day I was ready for my horizons to broaden. I wondered when they would let callers come. They had been there—frequently—the flowers that seemed to come in an endless stream, showed that. But for what are probably

very good reasons, they had not been shown in to see me.

I mentioned it with some show of anxiety, I suppose, for the nurse replied, whimsically, that calling hours were between two and three. By which I knew that to-day would be the day for them to come. I was anxious for them to come, for good and various reasons. First, because they were *they*, of course, wife, children, friends. But also I was strangely curious to know how they would react to my hospital-home. Would they be struck by things so utterly unlike my own conceptions of hospital atmosphere? I hoped Joe Burrell would drop in, and Fred Adams—others too, but this pair especially, for they needed something done to them if ever anybody did. All the things that were the matter with me they had too, and some things besides. And all the things that I had said about surgeons and hospitals they had said too, and some things besides. I wanted them to see how much they were really missing.

They came, and first of all, as I had hoped, came my wife. I was chagrined at first when, seeming to be impressed less by her husband lying there sound, with a lot of good years ahead of him, than by the quiet, the restful air of the place, she said, "What a perfectly heavenly place to be sick in!" Which was a tribute all the more remarkable, since on coming she had been

greeted by my nurse with the lilt of the South in her voice, and the attraction of a comely face as well!

Then Fred came—poor old Fred, trying some feeble wise crack about my being taken in by the doctors—and wheezing all the way through the recital. I let him rave on, noting that the nurse had carefully placed his chair so that he caught the spot of gold which the sunlight, pouring in through the windows, printed on the white wall, and where he could see the flowers (roses) piled up on the stand—in a chair that fitted his big form perfectly, and which soon had him at languorous ease.

I let Fred do the talking for a while, until he was tired out. Then I began to talk about the bully time I was having, the kindness of everybody to me, and all. By this time he was completely at rest, and finally he told me.

"You know, Jim, Doc Williams has been trying to get me into the shambles!"

"I wouldn't do it, old man," I told him. "Because you'd never leave, once you got in. I've taken this bed permanently. But *my* business will stand *my* being away. In fact, according to a report Mrs. Rad gave me a few minutes ago, they are having the best week since the war. But your business needs you, and you'd better stick by it—until you drop dead."

The nurse had come in a minute before and must have heard part of our conversation, and I asked,

"What about it, nurse? Could Mr. Adams by any chance, do you think, get a room, say the next one to mine, on a permanent basis?"

I wanted him to get the full effect of her voice, so that he could hear what nurses really were like. She rose to the occasion and said, with mock gravity:

"He might, if he wasted no time. But he would have to be quick about it!"

Well, to make a long story short, the old boy *was* in the hospital, inside of ten days, and now that he is out he is as enthusiastic about operations as I am. It hurts him that it was I and not he that pioneered the way, for he hasn't so much to brag about as a pacemaker as I have. In view of the adventuresome spirit with which I embarked upon the experience I refer to myself, in front of the boys, as Christopher Columbus. Fred, however, is sure to speak of himself as "Cortez, the guy that followed Chris's heels, but stayed a lot longer." For Fred's residence during convalescence exceeded mine by ten days.

. . . . . .

And then came the day when I went home. I shan't try to make the reader believe that I was reluctant to go, for I was glad to go back—

I wanted to be at work again, even if I was so readily dispensable at the office. And besides, Louie and the muskies were calling up there in the northlands, where the hillsides would even now have started to flame their scarlet and gold, and where there would be a tang of early autumn in the air. I could feel the grip of my new rod, and as the line raced through the air towards the lily pad over there by the old log, I could fairly hear the whine of the reel. Z-Z-z-z—

CLOSING UP THE BOOKS

SIX WEEKS have passed since I wrote the previous chapter—six weeks filled full to overflowing with a number of things. Chief among them was a trip to Louie's country. The casting arm lacked a little of the old-time snap, but next summer I will be back up there, and Louie will be wondering where I got it instead of what was the matter with the old boy's form. But the zest for the fight was there, and while the battles were longer, yet, thanks to the new rod, and a new lure or two, the muskies always gave up sooner or later. There has been, too, the business of forming re-contact with affairs at the office, and the getting back into the swing of busy days of business.

My chief point was, though, that I wanted to let a few weeks elapse after writing the above before I wrote this concluding chapter—I wanted to see if any of the enthusiasm for my operation and my "hospital training" wore off as my experience moved further into the perspective of time.

It hasn't. On the contrary, I am constantly remembering details of my stay there that I overlooked in writing the previous chapters. Little pleasantries of the doctor as he came in to

see me during my convalescence; new things the interne told me about living to be old enough to be my own grandfather; the heartiness of the nurse's laugh when inadvertently I told her one of my favorite stories the second time within three days, a test if there ever was one of anybody's amiability.

And as I remember these things I am impressed more and more with the value of the idea with which I faced my operation: the idea of thinking of my sickness in terms of business, the business of being sick, and of seeing if that business would not bring me something in the way of dividends. The "business" *has* paid me mightily. On the debit side of the ledger are a few days taken out of my business and golfing—mostly golfing—and the few hours of pain and sickness incident to being made something like an efficient machine again. And that is all.

On the credit side, however, is a list of items that is amazing. A glimpse into another world, for one thing—a world inhabited by kindly doctors and nurses fired with an enthusiasm for taking broken men and women and making them as good as new again, with a zeal for relieving suffering that is as unflagging as the zeal which our modern industrial life sometimes seems to show in causing suffering. To know that there are people who give their lives to this kind of thing without hope of huge monetary

gains alone offsets the debit items in the ledger. For I do not believe anybody can be the recipient of the courtesy, the deep sympathy, the kindliness, of these people without ever after having some of these same feelings whenever he is confronted with suffering.

And I think the lessons in humility which I learned were worth a great deal. I remember one time somebody gushing to me about how wonderful it was, speaking of people on my payroll, to feel that the welfare of these people depended upon one; and how thrilling it must be to be conscious that one is successfully guiding a business of proportions. I think I swelled up a little at the compliment, and probably I strutted about all day even more than I think I did. All of that, though, is taken out of a man when he sees quiet, competent doctors going about, modest and without time to think of their own importance—with dozens of lives depending upon them! Why, if the responsibility carried by any one of the quiet doctors at my hospital could be converted into equivalent importance in the business world and thrust upon a lot of guys who are already conducting fair-sized businesses, the people would have to work out an entirely new system of numbering hats—something in the way of serial numbers, maybe, beginning with 9¼. I would have measured for about a twelve until I saw these doctors

in action, and now I think if any man ever again mentions how wonderful it is to pay off people who have worked for you, I will think of these folks out at the hospital and—read this book to him!

One of the things I like best about my plan of making it a business to be sick was that it somehow included a desire on my part to help the attendants in their efforts to help me. I have never in my life appeared on any stage as a little ray of sunshine, and have no desire to play the part—but to see the little nurse with the Southern lilt in her voice go about her work with a new smile on her lips, and softly humming melodies as she went about her work, as the result of an effort on my part to hide some of the pain that I felt, and to smile when I wanted to use some of the picturesque cuss words that I had picked up from Louie—that was worth the price of admission. I am sure the little woman has no great opinion of my merits as a wit and raconteur, for my stories were as old and flat, I am afraid, as were my efforts at spontaneous humor. But she at least knew that I was trying to do my best, and if that was my best, why even *that* was something to smile and be happy about—anyhow she smiled and seemed happy.

The doctor told me one day how proud the nurse was of her patient; of how, in talking with the other nurses she championed me as the prize

patient of them all. "You probably have noticed," the doctor said, "how proudly she shows visitors into your room, as if to say, 'Mr. Radley may be your friend and all that, but he is my patient!' Which should make you proud, too, for she is one of the very best nurses on the staff. She told me the other day that we ought to hire you to give talks to people who come here on how to be model patients."

He laughed, and I told him that as a talker I was the prize clam of them all, but that I'd have to write a book—I'd write one anyhow sometime, I told him, because everybody else was doing it, and I told him how much fun it would be, because I had so many heroes and heroines to put into it, and judging from their books, a lot of writers are hard up for good heroes.

And from the nurse afterwards I found that the doctor on his part had been busy holding me up to the other patients and to the staff as the best patient that had ever walked, run, or been carried into the hospital—and all because I never complained; never talked about my pains; was not forever wanting to be sent home; tried to save the attendants unnecessary work and steps, and because my lips, as the nurse expressed it, had a permanent wave. "Why, Doctor Miller thinks you are the best doctor we have on our staff," she laughed.

And I found that this promotion work by the nurse and doctor was added to by the patients to whom I had sent flowers. Let them spy the nurse and they must know how the "flower man," as some of them called me, was doing.

I have no desire to go down in the history of the hospital as "Sunny Jim," but I do feel that to make the work of these wonderful people a little easier and their day a little brighter was worth the effort required to smile when a pain that they knew nothing about was cutting through me, and to keep silent when I wanted to cuss.

It was worth it, too, when, as I was leaving, my nurse accompanied me downstairs to the office, to remain with me to make sure that my car arrived for me.

When I told the superintendent that I would like to pay my bill, he smiled, for the story of my stardom as a patient must have reached him.

"You can't go around breaking *all* the rules of the place, Mr. Radley," he said, in mock seriousness. "You may be able to get away with it with the doctors and nurses—even though patients are not supposed to spread cheer all over the place. But never before has a patient come up and asked for his bill so that he could pay it right on the spot, and we're not going to let you begin it now. Do you want to see me faint

and have to be taken back for nurse here to have on her hands? What do you think, nurse?"

The nurse was equal to the occasion. "I would try to do my best for you," she laughed, "but after Mr. Radley—"

"There, you see, if you break any more records and I *do* suffer a stroke, I'll have to go to some other hospital, for I wouldn't stand much show here. And anyhow, from all I've heard, I am not sure we don't owe *you* a great deal for what you have meant to the staff by showing them and other patients how much a patient can do towards pulling himself back to health. If it hadn't been for that you might have been with us another week or two—your bill will be that much lower, so you can see it has its material advantages, too."

And then we found chairs in the lobby and started to wait for my car, the nurse and I. She glanced about to this person and that, to make sure that they were taking stock of *her* patient. As I sensed the little woman's pride in her exhibit I felt a momentary rise of several degrees in my self-importance, when it suddenly came upon me that it was *she* that *I* should be proud of. So I rose, and we strolled about the lobby, I assuming as nearly as I knew how the air of one who is obviously, very obviously, proud of somebody pacing up and down a lobby at his side. I doubt whether in any hospital

lobby there ever was so much mutual pride (one half of it justified) as was packed into that room during those few minutes before my car came.

And the finishing touch to my qualifications as an A1 patient of the first class, as I learned from the doctor, when a few days later I met him on the street, was when I sent a check to the Nurses' Fellowship, a house organization of the nurses' staff, to be used for whatever purpose they might desire. "They'll probably want to have a statue of you set up," he laughed, "dedicated to 'James Radley, first in the hearts of doctors, nurses, and fellow patients.'"

And next day a letter came from my nurse herself, who, since I had been her patient, was delegated to write me a letter of appreciation. "We have bought curtains for the windows in our headquarters," she concluded, "and a table and a lamp and some pictures for the walls—and now our rooms are almost as bright and sunshiney as No. 34 was when you were a patient in it." . . .

Yes, if you are going in for the hospital line, make a business of being sick—it pays all kinds of dividends!

THE END

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